

Forever Tonight At My Window

— Ci of Li Qing — zhao

(Chinese vs English)

李清照词欣赏

(美) 戈登·奥赛茵 闵晓红 黄海鹏 译 河南人民出版社

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even as she had been inspired by her professor, Huang Hai-peng. We three, together, produced Blooming Alone in Winter: Fifty Poems of Su Dong-po, also with the Henan People's Publishing House, in 1990. This present volume is intended as a companion to that one. It is again our good fortune the Henan People's Press agrees to represent the poems bilingually.

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## Translators' Notes

The reader has perhaps not had the pleasure of contemplating one of those Chinese walls, free-standing, windows in it made screen like by bamboo or animals at a stream or some mythical scene, one wall, not four, like the one out on the islands of Song Dynasty pavilions in The West Lake, at Hangzhou. Such a wall might appear at first to have no purpose of containing though it does invent perspectives that multiply the scenery on both sides. Which side is "inside" is totally in question. Inside is where you are as you contemplate such a wall. Interesting corners appear just out of sight, among the osmanthus and banyan trees. What sweet secret meetings such a wall provided for. What sly points of observation. It changes everything around it, though it walls nothing in and nothing out. It is the complement of the "nineturns" bridge, at every turn of which a subtly different aspect is presented. The green-tiled Chinese wall remains a center that watches and defines one's movement around it. It invents order by enduring as its center. Its meaning is somewhat more subtle than The Great Wall of China, but there are so many of them and their meaning is not lost on anyone who contemplates them. They represent the historical reliability of art, true art, furnish the deeper, perhaps even secret, emotional honesty of learning. They are metanomies of old arts. Their gates embody coming and going in not only private honesty but especially in the games of truth. Truth always occurs best with a bit of artifice, by arrangements, partially, often suddenly out of sly surprise. In one or

the other of the shades made by such walls, one might compose, upon the qin or with brush, ink and paper.

In Chinese one "writes a painting" and "paints a poem". The art of holding the brush correctly, of touching tip to paper just so, at such an angle and with such pressure and motion, produces beautifully correct images. The art begins with mastering the self mastering the means. Perception and choice of subjects and originality come as the artist is able to surrender to them. Means and occasion and the whole of the traditions of the technique become one in the genius of the would-be avatar. The imagination, hopefully, luckily, to one degree or another, will have been trained, usually by some one master, living or in the past. So the ancient artist, too, sat at his (or her) table working. Painting implied such a mastery of all the kinds of strikes; making poems implied such mastery of mythical seeing. To make either was to participate in the divinatory past. The finished poem, for instance, required that its characters' suggestions be performed in the mind of the "reader" as fully as he or she was able. The poem was all but a musical text, the cultured mind its performer, its instrument. (One remembers the connections enforced between learned scholars and the actual business of governing the empire in ancient times.)

Chinese paintings have no frames. They are unrolled as acts of the mind. Their genius is their convincing suggestion, clues of motion, touches of color, briefest suggestions of presence convincing us of a culture called "The Nature" that is so different from the outer world the Westerner calls nature. The senses not only can be deceived, they discover the substances and the humors of the world's illusory qualities thereby. One thinks of those Taoist paintings in which, say, two men fish in a small boat early in the morning in the yellow mist. The river is quite still. They move



sovery silently through the faint mist. But wait: Is there one man poling while the other makes ready to put out the net? Is it about to be dawn? No. The man standing in the stern is one brilliant descending stroke of ink, bent to push against...another stroke of ink, thin, no more substantial than a bamboo pole in mist. The boat is three horizontal strokes curling a bit at both ends. The other "man" is, again, one stroke curling upon itself, kneeling forward in anticipation. The yellow fog over the river is the sheer age of the paper. The trees on the shore are perhaps imperfections and the residue of age in the paper. There is no river; it was there by "suspension of disbelief" all the time. It must have been there; it needs to be there. There is no boat; those two men are ink. This charming picture of men laboring in the delicatest of mornings does not exist except by one's consent in enjoyment. The painting is, in fact, a kind of Taoist joke about "seeming" and "being". It says they're not separable. Indeed, painting is often referred to as wu-sheng-shi, "silent poetry". So poetry, combining image making with calligraphy, becomes "written pictures". Calligraphy, the accumulated signs of the past, unites them. In a kind of Chinese trinity, each combines the other two. Even to make the strokes is, inevitably, to participate in the oldest gestures of the culture, to join one's effort to that of the whole past. Even now, the Chinese have designated some "handwritings", or calligraphies, as national treasures. Most scholars of poetry know also the calligraphies of their masters. From ancient times to the present, poets and painters are ordinarily at least adequate at each other's arts, as often masters.

The connections between poetry and music have roots in the oldest shamanistic artifacts, where controlling art was invested in both the music of the words and their imagery. The tradition of the ci we are presenting in this volume reminds us how



that genre, made substantial by later Tang poets, reunited the art with its origins in popular songs, yue-fu. The magic of their performance, in contexts of high art at least, revived in spirit the ultimate past, the "wall of the past", beyond which there is still greater unknown mystery. Each person's passions and ultimate emotions bring him or her to that wall. "After great pain / a formal feeling comes," wrote the American poet Emily Dickinson, by way of comparison.

The highest value of a Chinese poem, then, is to recreate (as if from the ideal reservoir of the past) a semiotic order which offers, by means of characters, sound patterning, and received poetic forms, the present to the past. It is as if actions have already taken place and do so once again in the "narrative" of the poem. It is if substantives in the poem hardly need singulars or plurals, the dramatic meaning is so streamlined and pre-existent. Substantives and verbs, of being and action, usually alternate with words that qualify, that "empty" the substantives and verbs of their absolute meanings. These emptying characters also structure the rhythm. So two worlds, too, are present in the verse of a poem. The tendency in the verbing is to cast the poem's immediate actions, in comparison with ordinary usage to be sure, into a "passive" emotional intellection. The Western translator finds he has almost no choice but to make a Chinese poem "narrative" to render it, knowing that narration was the least essential part of the original in our sense of the notion.

This difficulty is joined by others. What does one do with the complex patterns and rhythms of balanced tones from line to line? What does one do with the meanings of the carefully imitated forms, themselves uninterruptedly evolved from the practices of the past? Translation seems hardly possible. It seems a

bargain with too many refinements in an original's composition. Indeed, I feel like saying that one really can't translate Chinese poems, because, in sum, poems in Chinese are not like poems in English, to say the least. So we proceed, trying to fail interestingly, or to succeed modestly at some seduction to cross-cultural interest.

The reader will see that we have chosen to represent the rather prolonged Chinese line of seven to ten characters with a break in the line, so that a ci of four rather long lines, compared with verse in English, becomes an eight line poem. We have labored to keep some suggestions of rhyme and to employ assonance and alliteration and echoing vowels to suggest the original balanced and matched tones, moments in which a modifier is placed in deliberate ambiguity in relation to a couple of nouns or between a noun and a verb, so that it might modify either or both of them, we have rendered as synaesthesias or transferred epithets, simply. i.e., we have taken the more fanciful suggestions.

**Gordon T. Osing**

## Li Qing-zhao and Her Times

The life of Li Qing-zhao, what we know of it anyway, was one devoted rather exclusively to her art of poetry and to her and her husband's life together collecting works of art, manuscripts, styli, paintings and objects of art. She was born in 1084 in "The City of Fountains", Jinan, in Shandong Province, into a family of notable scholars and writers on both sides and disappeared from known literary history in her middle sixties, in the midst of dynastic struggles against the invasion of Song China by Jin armies from the north. In the beginnings of her career she is literally the ecstatic and fortunate female allowed to study and train herself to be a poet and in her sixties she is the devoted and lonely widow observing from her window and balconies a country under seige and a beautiful life slipping to ruin like the blossoms of any spring.

### 1. The Southern Song Dynasty

In the declining years of the Tang Dynasty (820-907), central, imperial authority gave way to feudal, regional and frontier commanders. There followed a period, to the end of the Tang era, of constant conflict between the cabals of eunuch advisors and dynastic order. Seven out of eight emperors died violently in palace plots. In 880 peasant revolts had spread across the Yellow River valley and the capital at Chang'an (Xi'an) fell. This

peasantwar lasted ten years and engulfed half of China. Finally, in 907, General Zhu Wen murdered the last of the Tang emperors and proclaimed himself first emperor of the Liang Dynasty. This is the beginning of the era known as the Five Dynasties and Ten States.

During the period of the Five Dynasties there were thirteen emperors in fifty-three years, and the peoples and regimes of the Yellow River valley endured under feudal and military order. The country fell apart, into five power centers, the Later Liang, Tang, Jin, Han and Zhou. Ten regional tribes had the military might to remain lesser power centers. In 960, General Zhao Kuang-yin, Commander of the Later Zhou's imperial army, led a revolt against the throne and succeeded in conquering the other states. The capital was then moved to Kaifeng, renamed Dongjing (Eastern Capital). He failed only to defeat the Qidan (later the Liao), who remained unsubjugated throughout the Song era.

Between 960 and 997, General Zhao Kuang-yin (Emperor Tai Zu) and Zhao Kuang-yin (Emperor Tai Zong) founded the (Northern) Song Dynasty. They did their best to establish and foster at least a more efficient feudal order, offering highest government posts to scholar / artists. Promotions were introduced into regional and central governments. Government bureaus were developed to manage financial and social matters. Supervision of officials was introduced.

The middle era of the Northern Song Dynasty, the reigns of Zhen Zong, Ren Zong and Ying Zong (997-1067), was a period of decline, with an ever increasingly inefficient bureaucracy, failing military organization and capability, and the new central authorities' political corruption. The Liao and Xia states, in the west

and northwest, succeeded in scaring the Song emperor Zhen Zong into agreeing to pay tribute of 100,000 taels of silver and 200,000 bolts of silk annually. From 1040 to 1042 the Song throne was obliged to fight several major wars with the Xia people. Emperor Ren Zong agreed to pay tribute to them in 1044.

In the capital, all this while, the imperial court furnished an example of decadence still famous in Chinese cultural history. The throne introduced religious and intellectual reforms designed to confirm the people in their social and economic situations. A revival of Confucianism was fostered, in combination with aspects of Taoism and Buddhism, that proffered what was called "the absolute order of Heaven and Earth", i.e., the feudal order. The people and their emperor were one, in the Taijī Tu Shuo (An Explanation of the Diagram of the Absolute), written by Zhou Dun-yi. Interaction between yin and yang produced vitality, wrote Zhang Zai (1020–1077), a contemporary of Zhou Dun-yi, and the ideal world and the actual world were one, as the throne and the people were one, as all things in nature are one.

The reigns of Shen Zong, Zhe Zong, Hui Zong and Qin Zong (1067–1127) represent a progression from decline to extinction. Factions developed favoring reforms in agriculture and social order and still stricter imperial exploitation of the feudal economy.

This is the era of Shen Zong's so-called "New Laws", or "Green Law", favoring cooperation between the central government and the peasant farmers. The leading reformer Wang An-shi (1021–1086) supported allowing the farmers to borrow moneys to plant their crops, with an arrangement to pay back based on the season's bounty and the land's fertility. Wang

reasoned that among the principles of an ideal world was fate, which could be improved by "new learning" if men's laws could be added to natural laws.

Shen Kuo (1031–1095), another reformer, was one of China's great scientists. He knew mathematics, astronomy, calendar making, geography, physics, cartography, meteorology, weaponry, metallurgy, water conservancy, botany, and numerous if primitive sciences of the day. His most famous inventions were in the areas of observatory instruments and calendar making, for which he used his own mathematical deductions about circumferences. He also measured the difference between true and magnetic north. His overall contribution was to begin the separation between something like pure science and the more than primitive "science" of social organization in his era.

Sima Guang (1019–1086) was a leading idealist and fatalist. He argued that any opposition to the order of Nature, the feudal order, brought bad luck. People should live with resignation, he believed, and thereby obtain freedom from destructive cares. In his *History as a Mirror* (*Zi Zhi Tong Jian*), he wrote that all rites governing conduct and even gestures should be observed in order for life to be kept in the order of Nature. Cheng Hao (1032–1085), another conservative, wrote, "There is only one thing under Heaven called reason, and men and all material things must obey it, forming an inseparable whole. Different as the places might be wherein fate had placed people, each must obey the logic of his place, as things do in Nature."

This is, of course, the era of the great Song Dynasty poet Su Shi (Su Dong-po), who took the side of the Confucian conservatives until he had lived the life of the peasantry, and had seen their

plights and miseries up close. Then he joined them in their protests against corrupt officials working for an indifferent government, which put him again in the disfavor of the Dragon Throne. He lived most of his life writing his poems and essays and performing his official duties out in the provinces, often about as far from the capital as the Emperor could find to send him.

In 1120 a successful peasant uprising was led by Fang La. In three months he and his armies controlled six prefectures and fifty-two counties in what is now Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces, in the east. Eventually his army consisted of a million men. He promised to unify the entire country in ten months. A battle of one year's duration ensued and Fang La was defeated and put to death, but the ordeal exhausted the rulers' ability to govern. His campaign was organised to furnish peasants with work and other assistance in return for food and other kinds of support. He had popular support, needless to say.

Furthermore, after a successful Song attack on the Liao, with the assistance of Jin armies under an alliance, the Jin in turn attacked the Song and even sacked their capital Dongjing in 1127. More than three-thousand members of the court, including Emperor Qin Zong and his father Hui Zong, with their wives and concubines, other members of the royal family and the court's ministers, were taken captive and carried off north to the territory of the Jin.

In 1127, Zhao Gou, a brother of Emperor Qin Zong, assumed the imperial title at Nanjing (modern Shangqiu, in Henan Province), and began what historians call the Southern Song Dynasty. Zhao Gou became Emperor Gao Zong. In 1138 he moved his capital to Linan (Modern Hangzhou, in Zhejiang



Province). The emperor gave up on any plans to retake the great Yellow River Plains from the strong Jin armies.

But in the autumn of 1128, Wanyan Zongbi led a Jin army southward to Shandong and took Xuzhou. They crossed the Huai River and drove on Yangzhou, from which the Emperor had to flee again. He went to Hangzhou, then fled again to the East China Sea. But the Jin were more interested in raiding and carrying fortunes back than in land conquest. In 1130 they headed back north. They were attacked in retreating by Song Generals Han Shi-zhong and Yue Fei, who inflicted heavy casualties on the Jin army of as many as 300,000 men. In 1130 Zongbi himself was killed out west in a battle at Heshangyuan, near Baoji, in what is now Shaanxi Province. Beginning in 1133 other Jin armies marched south and engaged Song armies repeatedly, with major wins and defeats on both sides.

General Yue Fei became the most heroic military figure of the age, defeating Jin armies at Zhengzhou and Luoyang and Yancheng, in modern Henan Province. A subsequent military proverb had it that it was easier to move a mountain than to defeat an army led by Yue Fei (1103–1141).

But victories did not change Emperor Gao Zong's determination to sue for peace. He even feared the popularity of his winning generals. In 1139, an imperial edict from the Jin ordered the Song court to pay an annual tribute of 250,000 taels of silver and the same number of bolts of silk, and the Song accepted.

From then on the Song were a subjected state. Yue Fei and other generals were put to death. In spite of political and dynastic instability among the Jin rulers, the Song remained unable to

defend themselves from the superior military power. As late as 1161 the Jin invaded Song territory with an army of perhaps 600,000 men and raided at will. The Song Emperor fled again to the sea. The Jin plan to conquer all of south China ended only when General Liang Wan-yan was murdered by his own troops.

In 1162 Emperor Gao Zong abdicated in favour of his adopted son Zhao Shen, who became known as Emperor Xiao Zong. Under his rule, General Zhang Jun recaptured some Song territories. Conflict among the Song generals, though, presented the throne with too much military instability, and Emperor Xiao Zong again sued for peace, with a sizable duty to be paid. Thirty years of peace with the Jin were the result of the treaty.

In 1194 Zhao Kuo ascended the throne, as Emperor Ning Zong. Another campaign against the Jin followed, in 1206, and the Song armies were defeated and another heavy duty was enforced, this time 3,000,000 taels of silver annually after an initial penalty of 3,000,000 taels to the Jin armies for their losses.

Beginning in 1211, however, the Jin themselves were attacked from the north by Mongol invaders and could not defend themselves adequately. In 1234 the Mongols finally defeated the Jin totally and the era of Song-Jin conflict was ended. It had lasted a century, with untold costs in human life and suffering and wellbeing.

Needless to say, the literature and arts of the era reflected the struggles between nationalities and between classes. Both Lu You (1125-1210) and Xin Qiji (1140-1207) had participated in the conflicts with the Jin and they also wrote ci poems to old tunes, imitating the masters of the form from back in the later Tang